
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	2005 11th Street NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	July 29, 2021	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	21-419	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicant Torti Gallas Urban seeks on-going concept review for construction of a six-story multi-unit residential building on a vacant lot in the U Street Historic District. The site is located off the corner of 11th and U Street adjacent to a row of two-story rowhouses. Across the street is the landmark Industrial Savings Bank and a five-story apartment development that sits outside the historic district.

When presented last month, the Board complimented the quality of the project design and agreed that a six-story apartment building could be inserted into this location, but found that the flat-fronted, monumental design felt out of place in this location and didn't relate to its context on a residential side street. The Board encouraged the applicants to look more closely at the rowhouse character of the block and how the building could better relate to that.

Revised Proposal

The plans have been revised to introduce four-story projections on the front elevation – a central double projection and two flanking single projections. The entrance has been moved to the center within the double projection and demarcated with a metal and glass marquee. Windows within the projections would be paired double hungs, and French doors with shallow Juliette balconies have been introduced between the projections. The fifth and sixth floors would have double hung windows capped by transoms.

Evaluation

The proposal is significantly improved in relating to the site's residential context. The use of projections continues the cadence established by the block's bay-fronted rowhouses, and their four-story height provides a bridge to step down the building's height and mass. The greater variety in fenestration, including the judicious use of French doors with balconies, is more clearly residential in its vocabulary.

As the design continues to be developed, additional attention should be given to the fifth-floor windows. The classical, tripartite architectural treatment of the façade, with the sixth floor as an attic story above the primary cornice, suggests that this floor would have differentiated fenestration from the floors below and that the fifth floor would continue the fenestration pattern

of floors two through four. And as discussed at the previous meeting, the prominent side elevation facing U Street may warrant additional design development to more fully express itself as a primary elevation. Extending the cornice and belt courses and introducing windows, at least on the top floors, should be evaluated.

Board members also made some comments about the materiality and treatment of the secondary elevations - proposed in fiber cement panels with trim boards - but without reaching a definitive conclusion on whether additional refinement was needed. While the intent to provide some texture and visual interest to these elevations is laudable, it is debatable whether the resulting scale and texture are beneficial to the design or simply draw attention to the fact that they aren't more traditional masonry. While HPO believes some simplification or elimination of the trim boards would be an improvement, the Board's guidance is sought.

Recommendation

HPO recommends the Board find the revised concept compatible with the character of the U Street Historic District and delegate final approval to staff.

HPO contacts: Imania Price, Steve Callcott